

Annexe C

The Future of Cambourne.

Introduction

The Preferred Options Report on Rural Centres identifies Cambourne as a Rural Centre. It also suggests that there is a shortfall of 366 dwellings identified in the Housing Land Supply could require additional allocations in the District. The Report suggests that continuing to apply an average density of 30 dwellings per ha, as set out in PPG 3 to the remaining undeveloped land at Cambourne could result in around an additional 700 dwellings coming forward here over the 3,300 granted outline planning permission. The report recognises that the issue of density cannot be viewed in isolation, and as such also recommends that an adjustments to the overall number of dwellings at Cambourne would also require a review of the Master Plan and Design Guide.

Background

Cambourne was granted outline planning permission in 1994. A Master Plan and Design Guide were approved in 1996, which set out the guiding principles for development at Cambourne.

Key features included:

- Three separate but inter-linked 'villages', with a spine road running east-west, along which principal services would be based, primarily within the centre of Gt. Cambourne.
- Two areas of open space separating the three 'villages' allowing fingers of countryside / landscape into the settlement, which would also accommodate surface water attenuation/balancing lakes.
- Each 'village' to be centred on a village green with greenways connecting the greens to the countryside, to create a 'green network'.
- Densities to be concentrated around the settlement centre and village greens, thinning out towards the edges, acknowledging that conventional housing densities had been reduced throughout to achieve village character.

Key objectives included the conservation of:

- Village character
- Community
- Rural Character
- Ecology
- Energy

At that stage, in 1996, an indicative distribution of houses proposed 1343 dwellings within Great Cambourne (on 54 ha), 612 dwellings in Lower Cambourne (on 26ha) and 1238 dwellings in Upper Cambourne (on 47.5ha), with 107 dwellings in the settlement centre (on 2.1ha), giving an average density across the settlement of 25 dwellings / ha.

Since that time there has been a significant change in government guidance, with the emphasis of re-use of previously developed land, and avoiding the inefficient use of

land by avoiding densities, which result in a net density of less than 30 dwellings / ha as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG 3). There is equally a greater emphasis on the importance of design, and the importance of context, character and setting.

The Current Position at Cambourne

1983 dwellings now have detailed permission (or the Council has resolved to grant permission) on land within Lower Cambourne and the central and northern parts of Great Cambourne. These are detailed in Appendix 1. Densities to date are averaging at 33 dwellings / ha but range within the site from 25 -102 dwellings / ha to reflecting the respective site's location and context and different character areas being created.

In addition a number of 'windfall' sites, which did not lie within the outline planning application site area (land at Monk Drive, Greenhaze, Crowdene Nurseries and Monkfield Paddocks) have since been granted / resolved to grant planning permission (83 units), which are over and above the 3,300. Where appropriate there have also been further Section 106 agreements to secure additional affordable housing and educational contributions.

The remaining areas uncommitted by reserved matter consent (or resolutions to grant consent) include land between Lower and Great Cambourne (2.7ha), land in the southern part of Great Cambourne (19.8ha), and all of Upper Cambourne (47.5ha).

In addition further residential units are likely within the settlement centre, particularly flats above future shops.

Considerations

Development at Cambourne is currently occurring within the terms of PPG3. Being at the lower end of the Government's stated density range (30 – 50 dwellings / ha) and lower range set out in the Approved Cambridgeshire Structure Plan has enabled the development to continue to adhere to the core principles and development framework set out for Cambourne as embodied in the Master Plan. If this trend continues, with the application of an average density of 30 dwellings / ha across the residual land in Gt. and Upper Cambourne, it would result in approximately an additional 700 units. At this scale and through sensitive design and siting of higher densities within the core areas, Cambourne could be developed without undermining the core principles of the Master Plan and Design Guide, which remain appropriate in the context of the prevailing rural character of the district.

In the Draft Urban Capacity Study (UCS), which is being published alongside the Preferred Options Reports for the Local Development Framework, a notional density of 30 dwellings / ha has been used for the majority of the sites in recognition of the rural character of the villages in South Cambridgeshire (UCS page 19, paragraph 7.3). The Structure Plan at P5/3 states that densities of at least 40 dwellings / ha should be sought in locations close to a good range of existing or potential services and facilities and where there is, or there is potential for, good public transport accessibility. The Structure Plan density of 40 dwellings / ha has only been used in the UCS where there is good access to a good level of public transport. Cambourne does not currently meet the required standard for "good public transport" but

nevertheless has been put forward as a Rural Centre; it is likely that it will have good public transport when development is complete. The UCS suggests that where a village has good public transport, only those parts within 200m of a bus stop on the good public transport route should be considered as having good access to the good public transport system (UCS page 21, paragraphs 7.10 - 7.14). In Cambourne assumptions have had to be made about the route of public transport and location of stops. However, it is clear that only part of Upper Cambourne would be appropriate for the higher density of 40 dwellings / ha on this basis.

The acceptance of the lower density threshold level is considered to be appropriate given the extensive areas of 'edges' involved around both Great and Upper Cambourne where this important interface with a countryside edge will require careful treatment and lower density areas. It also provides flexibility given some of the modifications that will be needed, for example for land to accommodate additional services and facilities that will be required to support the proposed additional 700 dwellings, full details of which are likely to be explored as part of the LDF public participation process.

These are likely to include:

- An additional (third) primary school
- Contributions to secondary education
- Public open space
- Community facilities and services, such as those for health
- Public transport

There are also likely to be modifications to the developable area within Upper Cambourne as a result of next stage of dualling works to A428 (Cambourne – Hardwick). To accommodate the new road alignment and maintain the degree of landscape and separation between housing and road as set out in the current Master plan, the extent of developable area will need to be reduced; overall housing numbers however will remain unchanged. The result will be to increase densities in appropriate locations, allowing higher densities along parts of the spine road / village green in Upper Cambourne in keeping with the original design objectives of concentrating higher densities closer to the centres and along public transport routes.

Detailed apportionment would be a matter for a revised Master Plan, nevertheless there are some issues that can be highlighted at this stage:

It will be crucial to maintain a very low density of development on parcels Gc09, 10 and 11 to ensure that the objective of separation between Great and Lower Cambourne is maintained, with the green finger of open countryside / landscape washing over a sporadic scattering of dwellings, as originally envisaged.

Conversely the number of residential units apportioned for the settlement centre should be increased. Here mixed uses are to be encouraged with residential a particularly appropriate use primarily at first floor level (above commercial and retail uses), to add vitality and activity to this part of Cambourne and to assist with the creation of an appropriate urban form / scale of building. The 107 dwellings initially proposed have been exceeded. Given the amount of land still available for development, (parcels W3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8), and based on densities achieved in W2 (flats and offices above shops), at least another 100 residential units are likely over and above those already permitted.

Any new outline planning application for these 700 houses will require a revised Master Plan. Any planning permission would be subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 Agreement which will need to set out the additional facilities, the level of developer contributions and the trigger points at which they should be provided.

Preferred Approaches

Build rates at Cambourne have averaged 270 dwellings p.a, reaching 357p.a. in 2003, although slowing down again in 2004. It is clearly important that with an on-going development such as Cambourne that the planning process provides as much certainty as soon as possible for all involved – the local community, developers, service providers etc.

The current LDF programme indicates submission to the Secretary of State in June 2005, with an independent examination in early 2006 and a binding Inspector's report in October 2006. The impact this has on the development programme for Cambourne can be accommodated within the existing phasing plans. Within that time frame, and based on recent build rates, Great Cambourne is likely to be close to completion, with Upper Cambourne still to be developed. It is likely therefore that many of the additional dwellings will be accommodated in Upper Cambourne and in the High Street area of Great Cambourne.

As such it is recommended that development continues within the developable areas of Great and Upper Cambourne at an average density of 30 dwellings / ha with a commensurate increase in around 700 dwellings at Cambourne, and that the District Council and Cambourne Consortium jointly review the Master Plan and Design Guide at the earliest opportunity.

Not to increase the capacity of Cambourne by around 700 dwellings would result in a very low density of development on the remaining land in Great Cambourne and at Upper Cambourne of only 16 dwellings / ha. This would not make good use of land. The only other alternative would be to reduce the developable area very significantly, which again would not make good use of the Cambourne site.

Expansion at Cambourne?

The Local Development Framework offers the opportunity to examine other options for the development of Cambourne. The concept for Cambourne as expressed in the approved Master Plan and Design Guide is for three villages, Great, Lower and Upper Cambourne, each with a distinct character and separate from each other but with a common centre where the main services are to be located. It is very much based on the principle that there is a strong rural character to the settlements, and care has been taken to ensure that the surrounding open land and countryside not only surrounds the villages but also separates them from each other.

During the Structure Plan process a number of representations suggested that there should be growth beyond the areas allocated in the Master Plan. Proposals have been suggested to enlarge Cambourne significantly by allocating additional land:

- To the east onto land currently occupied by Bourn Airfield
- To the west towards Caxton Gibbet
- To the north on the far side of the A428 dual carriageway.

Any of these options would completely alter the character of Cambourne, changing it from a village concept as set out in the Master Plan and Design Guide (as set out earlier in the Background section) to one of a market town. This cannot be done successfully given the way in which Cambourne has been and continues to be developed. It would cause significant problems in the provision of services. For example, a significantly larger settlement might be of sufficient scale to warrant its own secondary school, but this would be a substantial investment from developers and present difficulties for Comberton Village College which has been extended through developer contributions to serve Cambourne.